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## ABSTRACT

If those teaching advertising courses with significant ethics components are concerned about having a genuine--as opposed to cosmetic--impact on how their students translate what is taught in the classroom to the "real world," they must focus on the idea of "oughtness." The question is: what can instructors in advertising courses do--if anything--to motivate students to act more ethically once they move beyond the confines of the classroom, to do what ethically ought to be done when faced with a particular ethical dilemma? The first task for the instructor may well be to demonstrate to students the relevancy of ethics to their "everyday" lives. Students must understand that ethics deals with relationships with others. Students will never appreciate the "marriage" of ethics and advertising if they fail to view consumers and the general public as persons to whom they have obligations. It is essential that students recognize that ethical behavior in advertising does not occur in a vacuum--ethical advertisers are first ethical people generally and the only way to motivate the will to act ethically is to develop the will to act ethically habitually and generally. Raising advertisers' and students' ethical consciousness is not sufficient--in the end, advertising and advertising people will be judged on their conduct. (Contains 56 notes.) (RS)

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Advertising Division

**The Ethical Challenge for Advertisers:  
To Do the Right, Not "Just" Know It!**

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**The Ethical Challenge for Advertisers:  
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...to know the right is not necessarily to do it. Socrates gave us only half the truth when he said that to know the good is to do the good. St. Paul gave us the other half when he said, "The good that I would do, that I do not do. The evil that I would not do, that I do." Knowledge of the good is clearly a necessary condition for doing it, but it is equally clearly, not sufficient.

**Thomas Lickona<sup>1</sup>**

America has always had something of a "love-hate" relationship with advertising. In his recently published book on advertising law, for example, Fueroghne states that "while some consumers have expressed a fear of--and others have indicated a hope for--the demise of advertising, it is...integral to our market environment."<sup>2</sup> Others suggest that American society and advertising are uniquely interdependent in that the United States "provided one important precondition for advertising; abundance."<sup>3</sup> It is argued that:

It is when potential supply outstrips demand--that is when abundance prevails--that advertising begins to fulfill a really essential

function. In this situation the producer knows that the limitation upon his operations and upon his growth no longer lies, as it lay historically, in his productive capacity, for he can always produce as much as the market will absorb; the limitation has shifted to the market, and it is selling capacity which controls his growth.<sup>4</sup>

This dependence upon--and distrust of--advertising has created something approaching schizophrenia not only among the general public, but within the advertising community itself. Many men and women active in advertising want to operate in an ethical manner, but are concerned that by doing so they will be placing themselves at a competitive disadvantage. While they might prefer, for example, to avoid stereotyping individuals and groups, too many are likely to respond to criticism that they do so by saying, "Gee, I'd really like to avoid these stereotypes, but I've got to use them to survive."<sup>5</sup>

Students in advertising sequences at the undergraduate level face these same competing pressures--at least at an emotional and intellectual level. On one hand they are told emphatically that "bad ethics is bad for business."<sup>6</sup> At the same time they are besieged with examples of questionable advertising practices. They worry about getting "that first job" and too frequently begin to believe that while being concerned about ethics is fine in the confines of the classroom, a more "realistic" attitude is demanded

in the give and take of that "real world" they will enter after graduation.

This, it must be emphasized, is not to "preach doom and gloom." Progress in raising the ethical consciousness of many persons in advertising has undoubtedly been realized. Enlightened advertisers have come to believe that "advertising provides a valuable service to the seller, the buyer, and the public and serves the spirit of trade only so long as it remains truthful and honest (emphasis added)."<sup>7</sup>

Significant as such progress may be, there remains a critically important corollary consideration that has been too frequently ignored. There may well be an at least implicit assumption that many of the ethical problems confronting advertising men and women will be surmounted once a majority of persons active in the field are motivated to acknowledge that serious ethical issues confront them. Once that occurs, at least so the theory goes, advertising men and women can be "educated" to recognize what would be an appropriate--ethical--response to a particular moral dilemma.

One must, of course, have some knowledge of what it means to be ethical before one can act ethically. That knowledge, however, does not necessarily translate into ethical behavior. As the introductory quote by Lickona at the beginning of this paper suggests, "to know the right is not necessarily to do it." The advertiser fearful of not achieving a projected market share if he

or she acts in an ethical manner may have a very clear understanding as to what is the proper course of action to take under a given set of circumstances. That person may not, however, be willing to pay the price for, in fact, acting ethically.

A concern for advertising ethics will be of little relevancy to either those active in the field or the general public, however, if that concern is not translated into something more than an intellectual appreciation of what it means to be ethical. Fagothey correctly notes that "the subject matter of ethics is human conduct, those actions which a man performs consciously and willfully, and for which he is held accountable."<sup>8</sup> He adds:

The aspect or point of view from which ethics studies human conduct is that of its rightness or wrongness, its **oughtness**, if we may manufacture a noun corresponding to the ethical verb ought, which is the real verb in every ethical judgment. Ethics is not interested in what a man **does**, except to compare it with what he **ought** to do. We call those actions right which a man ought to do, and those actions wrong which a man ought not to do. Ethical writers of almost all shades of opinion agree that the investigation of the **ought** is the distinctive feature of ethics, the one that separates it from every other study.<sup>9</sup>

If those teaching advertising courses with significant ethics

components are concerned about having a genuine--as opposed to cosmetic--impact on how their students translate what is taught in the classroom to the "real world," they must focus on the idea of oughtness. Because oughtness suggests a concern for behavior--particularly in those circumstances where the rightness of a particular action may not be in one's self-interest--the question really becomes one of will. More specifically, one must ask, what can instructors in advertising courses do--if anything--to motivate students to willing act more ethically once they move beyond the confines of the classroom, to do what ethically ought to be done when faced with a particular ethical dilemma?

This, it should be noted, is not to suggest that instructors in advertising courses do the thinking for students, that courses in advertising ethics begin to approximate efforts of indoctrination. Callahan insists that "the purpose of an ethics course...would be begged by a preestablished blueprint of what will count as acceptable moral behavior."<sup>10</sup> Lickona is even more explicit when he declares that "ethics courses cannot try to teach particular moral behaviors; that would be indoctrination."<sup>11</sup>

Rather than indoctrinating students, the advertising instructor must find ways to motivate them to develop what has been called "a sense of moral obligation."<sup>12</sup> Students must be provided "with those ingredients of ethical analysis and self-criticism, such that...(they) would, if the analysis seemed to require it, both recognize the importance of changing behavior, and be prepared

to change....It is not change per se that should be the goal, but the potentiality for change as a result of ethical analysis and judgment."<sup>13</sup> The instructor helps provide students with the tools to make an intelligent ethical appraisal of a particular situation. The special concern of this paper, however, is that they also have the will to act correctly--perhaps courageously--in response to their appraisal of that situation.

In short why, one needs to ask, have advertising students study ethics at all if they don't become ethical advertising men and women? What good is it if a student gets "A" letter grades in advertising courses with a significant ethical component if that student does not carry that "learning" into the job market upon graduation. One might suggest that:

...if students learned to "do ethics" and didn't become better people, if they merely learned to talk a good game in the confines of a course, if their human relations, their work, their stance in the world remained untouched, would not the whole huge effort to teach ethics in our colleges and professional schools be judged a cruelly disappointing failure, deepening intolerably the already prevailing cynicism about the gap between what people say and what they do?...if the movement to teach ethics is serious about developing not only the capacity to think



ethically but also the commitment to act ethically, then it will have to find ways to fire the will as well as the intellect, to engage the heart as deeply as the mind, and to put will, intellect, and feeling to the test of behavior.<sup>14</sup>

The question is now to transfer the "theory" of the classroom into the "reality" of behavior in the field. In that light, three suggestions are presented in this paper that the teacher might wish to consider in his/her efforts to achieve such a goal. They are:

1. The first task for the instructor may well be to demonstrate to students the relevancy of ethics to their "everyday" lives--quite apart from a specific focus on advertising.

2. Students must understand that ethics deals with one's relationships with others. Students will never "appreciate" the "marriage" of ethics and advertising if they fail to view consumers and the general public as persons to whom they have obligations.

3. It is essential students recognize that ethical behavior in advertising does not occur in a vacuum. That is, ethical advertisers are first ethical people generally and the only way to motivate the will to act ethically professionally is to develop the will to act ethically habitually and generally.

#### **Bringing the Issue of Ethics "Home"**

Too frequently undergraduates in all ethics classes bring with them a notion that ethics is about something "out there." They approach the study of ethics like they do any other "academic"

subject. That is, they view it as a body of material that must be mastered in order to pass an exam that will allow them to complete this particular "hurdle" on their way to getting a degree.

It is critically important that the instructor in an ethics course in a professional school demonstrate to students that ethics is intrinsic to what professional people do. One way to do this is to first encourage students to acknowledge that ethical decision making is something that confronts an individual in a variety of work and social settings. One might suggest that "before students can appreciate how the writings of a Plato or a Kant can provide insight into future decisions they make...(in advertising), it is necessary to show how ethical decision making impacts upon their present situations."<sup>15</sup>

The importance of this became forever fixed in my mind several years ago when I was teaching a course that touched upon ethics only briefly.<sup>16</sup> I was discussing problems that develop when communicators lie--a rather elementary subject. A student in the back of the room raised her hand. Little did I realize at the time that her question would become one that I would cite in every ethics class I would teach from that point on.

The student said she worked in a shoe store. Apparently the quality of shoes sold in this particular store was something well short of high. If a customer inquired about quality, however, she said she would tell them that they were a quality product. She asked if I thought she was lying to the customers and whether I

thought her conduct was unethical.

Later the full impact of her question began to hit home. Here I was talking about complex ethical dilemmas that may impact on professional communicators and this student had to ask whether it was unethical to lie to customers in a shoe store. How, one feels compelled to ask, can a student empathize at all with the ethical quandaries that will impact on him/her in the "real professional world" of advertising, if he/she does not know if lying to a customer in a shoe store is unethical in the "world" of part-time employment?

Over the years whenever I cite this example, several students invariably identify with this student's "plight." "If she tells the customer the truth," students will argue, "then the customer won't buy the shoes and that will put her job in jeopardy. If she loses her job she may not be able to stay in school. Besides, people going to a low-priced shoe store understand that the quality of shoes is not the same as at Macy's."

Admittedly discussing questions related to lying to customers about shoes is not ordinarily the material of best selling case study books in advertising. But is this example that far removed--at least in theoretical construct--from that which impacts on advertisers in the "real world?" Certainly the magnitude is different, but the decision making process is nearly identical. Does the individual, whether a student working part-time in a shoe store or a seasoned veteran for a major advertising agency, have

the will to do what he/she ought to do when faced with a particular ethical dilemma?

Further, if students do not have the will or do not understand why one does not lie to a customer "even" in a part-time job, there is little likelihood they will be magically transformed into ethical professionals upon fulfilling the requirements the university sets down for awarding an undergraduate degree. One might suggest that for many students there is first "a need to cultivate an 'ethics of the everyday,' a morality of minor affairs that translates respect for persons into small deeds of kindness, honesty, and decency."<sup>17</sup> Advertising students need to be encouraged to put ethics "on the daily agenda."<sup>18</sup> Put another way, bringing ethical questions to a level to which advertising students can relate should assist in "stimulating the moral imagination"<sup>19</sup> of those students--a necessary step in the successful "teaching" of ethical decision making:

A course in ethics can be nothing other than an abstract intellectual exercise, unless a student's feelings and imagination are stimulated. Students must be provoked to understand that there is a 'moral point of view'..., that human beings live their lives in a web of moral relationships, that a consequence of moral theories and rules can be either suffering or happiness (or usually, some combination of both), that the moral dimensions of life are as often hidden

as visible, and that moral choices are inevitable and often difficult.<sup>20</sup>

Black and Whitney note that "there would probably be no need for ethics if there were no dilemmas, no choices to make."<sup>21</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary defines a dilemma as a "situation requiring a choice between unpleasant alternatives (emphasis added)."<sup>22</sup> Before advertisers develop the will to make the difficult--but correct--choice they must have the ethical insight to recognize those situations in which such a dilemma confronts them. The development of this insight can begin at the undergraduate level. An important factor in such development may rest on the instructor's ability to bring ethical issues "home"--to a level to which students can readily relate.

### Ethics and Significant Others

A second necessary step in building the will to act ethically rests in coming to appreciate the fact that ethical acts must not be viewed in isolation of one's relations with others--and obligations to them. Undergraduates wishing to someday be ethical advertisers need to understand why other people--and society as a whole--must be viewed as more than ends to increased "bottom-line" profitability. Schindler speaks to this point when he states:

In our relationship with others...we cannot be satisfied simply to say that we have not harmed someone, that we have not violated another's rights; nor can we be content to restrict our

responsibility to those areas where others have a juridical claim on us....We bear responsibility for the human flourishing of others; and it is only as we address that responsibility that our own life flourishes.<sup>23</sup>

This issue is of particular importance to advertising students because by its very nature advertising is in the persuasion business. There are those, of course, who would suggest that one is employing an oxymoron by advancing the phrase "ethical persuasion"--somewhat equivalent to speaking about "jumbo scrimp!" More thoughtful persons, however, would argue that "it cannot be seriously maintained that all persuasion is bad or undesirable."<sup>24</sup> For the advertiser--and advertising students--the question, therefore, must center around making judgments as to which types and methods of persuasion are ethical and which are not.

Students need to understand that the key to making such judgments ethically rests in the advertiser placing the concerns of his/her intended audience at the same level as his/her own and those of the client or employer. The advertiser has ethical obligations to those to whom his/her messages are directed, obligations to provide "truthful, relevant information that makes rational, significant choice possible."<sup>25</sup> The advertiser must view those whom he/she is attempting to persuade "as capable of making rational choices, rather than either as manipulatable 'tools' of the persuader for personal gain or as objects of paternalistic

concern."<sup>26</sup>

In this regard advertising students can be introduced to the work of Kenneth Andersen who defines persuasion as "a communication activity that unites people--yet it also permits maximum individual choice. It recognizes that people have a right and responsibility for their choices."<sup>27</sup> Commenting on Andersen's work, Jaksa and Pritchard suggest that a key is Andersen's emphasis on "the importance of voluntary change in the person being persuaded...(which) distinguishes persuasion from indoctrination and coercion, which do not allow significant choice....it also suggests that ethically acceptable modes of persuasion do not rely on deceptive manipulative tactics."<sup>28</sup>

That is not to say students in advertising must be taught that only those advertising efforts providing "sterile" and "cold" facts which can be tested by some scientific formula will be judged ethical from the perspective of significant others. The issue, again, is providing that information necessary that allows significant choice:

Not all choices can, or even should, be based on evidence as proof. Rational argument is not the only morally acceptable form of persuasion. However, even when evidence or proof is not available, those capable of rational choice are respected only if manipulative and deceptive tactics are

avoided. For example, one might be persuaded to buy a car not because it can be proved to be the "best" car on the market, but because it is aesthetically pleasing. While not necessarily interested in having the "best" car on the market, the buyer would, nevertheless, be upset to learn that the car gets only 14 miles per gallon when it was advertising as getting 30 miles per gallon.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the key to building some sense of ethical obligation in advertising students rests in moving them beyond assuming that ethical decisions making can be defined in terms of self-interest--even that form commonly known as the "enlightened" variety.<sup>30</sup> Too often students--and advertising people in general--speak about doing good because doing good "pays". Hospers notes:

The most usual answer, and the most popular answer to the question "Why should we do right acts?" is "Because it **pays** to do so--because it will later if not immediately, turn out to be to our interest to do so." This motive is appealed to so constantly that we are hardly aware of it. We are told to be honest, but not because honesty is a good thing: we are told that "Honesty pays" and "Honesty is the best **policy**"--the best policy, of course, being the one that most benefits us in the



long run.<sup>31</sup>

Such an attitude is equivalent to saying " 'Drive safely--the life you save may be your own'--the implication being that if the life you save were not your own you need not be so anxious to drive safely."<sup>32</sup> No, driving recklessly--or not respecting significantly others in advertising campaigns--is wrong (unethical) because to do so violates basic moral precepts and this--of and in itself--is wrong. Decisions as to whether particular actions the advertiser might take are right or wrong must be based "on considerations of universal human rights and respect for human dignity."<sup>33</sup> Other persons must be considered and, therefore, "not be treated merely as a means to an end; they are to be respected as ends in themselves."<sup>34</sup>

### "Developing" the Will

Having established that ethical issues in advertising must be placed in a context to which students can relate and that students must understand that ethics deals with obligations to others, the central question remains--how does one develop the will to, in fact, act ethically? While it is true that one must first recognize the ethical issue and develop a sense of obligation, one could remain unwilling to do that which is right because one lacked either the conviction or courage--or both--to do so.

The key to "right conduct" has already been touched upon in the previous reference to Lickona's admonition to "cultivate an 'ethics of the everyday,' a morality of minor affairs that

translates respect for persons into small deeds of kindness, honesty, and decency." Lickona suggests that one must "build" the will to act ethically when he states that "decency and integrity in our everyday encounters are both important in themselves and likely to be important in strengthening our disposition to be moral when we face the big decisions. If we do not nurture ethics on the small scale, we may not get it on the grand scale either."<sup>35</sup>

What Lickona is speaking of, in terms more familiar to those trained in traditional moral philosophy, is the **habitual** motivation of the will to do that which is right--more specifically the development of virtuous behavior. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, a "habit means a disposition according to which that which is disposed is either well or ill disposed, and either in itself or with reference to something else."<sup>36</sup> Fagothey insists that "the only way of assuring ourselves that our acts will be morally good is by turning them into a habit. Virtue and vice are only names for morally good and morally bad habits."<sup>37</sup> He argues:

The good life does not consist of unrelated good acts. The acts lead into one another, reinforce one another, and form chains of good conduct. The good life would be harrowingly difficult if each good act had to be done on its own without any influence from one's past behavior.

...Virtue testifies to good acts done, for there is no other way of acquiring a virtue, but

it is also and chiefly the spring of further and better moral acts in the future. Virtue stands somewhere between a single good deed and a whole good life.<sup>38</sup>

Advertisers--and therefore advertising students--will never be able to meet the challenge to act ethically when faced with a difficult ethical dilemma if they are not virtuous in their "everyday" life--both in the office and outside it.

Jeb Stuart Magruder--who gained "fame" during the Watergate hearings that eventually lead to Richard Nixon's resignation--spoke directly to this reality when he said, "It's a question of slippage....Each act you take leads you to the next act, and eventually you end up with a Watergate. It's very typical in a large corporation."<sup>39</sup> Magruder had not developed the habit--virtue--of acting ethically and when "push came to shove" he went along, or in his words, "I followed instructions and did things I did not agree with because it was important for my personal success."<sup>40</sup> Like many others, he enjoyed his job, had children to feed and educate, and he wasn't rich. He found that "as he cooperated, he discovered that it became easier to lie, to break the law, to participate in the cover-up...A subtle, gradual erosion of his moral character occurred."<sup>41</sup> Earlier Eugene Exman spoke to this same point:

"Can the conscious calculated output of untruths, half-truths and misleading irrelevancies,"

writes a friend, "be continued for a long period without an ever-mounting cost in the currency of character? Can playing fast with the truth and sincerity yield peace of mind? It's touching to note how inadequately a man's hard-won cynicism covers the gap between the shirt of respectability and the pants of expediency. I know men to whom the urgency of truth dawned in their middle years, when they were shackled to commercial falsehood by loyalty, by affection, by pride and by habit. Such a man suffers. To regain his soul would cost him his whole world."<sup>42</sup>

The advertiser who habitually motivates the will to respond to all "ordinary" matters in an ethical manner will more likely respond to the difficult dilemma that confronts him/her with the requisite fortitude--courage--because that virtue has become intrinsically part and parcel of how that advertiser defines his/her very being. That individual defines him/herself as an ethical person and could not imagine practicing his/her craft in any other manner.

But--and this is critical where students are concerned--it must be emphasized that "no one is born with virtues, and they do not come to one by chance but only by long and arduous training."<sup>43</sup> While it is true that one is "born with a nature endowed with certain powers of acting...(and that) habit does not give...(one)

the power to do something...(habit does enable one) to do something more easily and readily."<sup>44</sup> One might argue that:

If the habit is good, it turns our originally fitful and clumsy efforts into quick, smooth, and masterful action. If the habit is bad, it makes us fall more easily and readily into the undesirable course. Habit has therefore been called a "second nature," for just as nature is the principle of action itself, so habit is the source of facility in action. The habit comes from the acts, and the acts come from the habit, but in different ways: by acting repeatedly we acquire the habit, and the habit now acquired tends to manifest itself in habitual acts.<sup>45</sup>

Can the instructor have any impact in this regard at the undergraduate level? Rest argues that one can at least "sensitize students to the ethical problems that they will inevitably face in their jobs."<sup>46</sup> He says that at the undergraduate level this can be accomplished while at the same time giving students "opportunities to gain experience and strategies in solving these problems (in the benign environment of school)."<sup>47</sup> He also responds to those who contend, parenthetically, that perhaps by the time an individual enters college it may already be too late to change values. He contends that "this argument assumes a form of development determinism that psychological research does not

support....Deliberate educational attempts to influence awareness of moral problems and to influence the reasoning process are shown to be effective....Moreover, studies link test scores...with actual, real-life behavior."<sup>48</sup>

That is not to say the advertising instructor can devise some "magic wand" that can be waived and in an instant eliminate all the ethical problems that have plagued advertising and those active in the field. If ethics were only a matter of classroom learning, the before mentioned Jeb Stuart Magruder would never have become involved in the Watergate scandal. Magruder had taken an ethics course from William Sloane Coffin, who later became a well known figure in the field. In fact, Magruder said he saw Coffin as more than a teacher. He said he "related very well to Bill. He seemed to understand."<sup>49</sup>

There are also those, unfortunately, who believe that the study of professional ethics should not have a major place in the undergraduate professional school curriculum. In their eyes, instruction should focus on providing students with the training necessary to entry level employment. Are faculty not taking a risk in spending time teaching ethics, time that would be better spent preparing students for the "realities" of the job market?

Along with Macklin, one might reply that "it is better to take the risk. Where laudable goals or worthwhile ideals exist in human endeavor, it is better to strive to achieve them and fall short than never to seek these goals at all."<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusions

There are many persons--including some in advertising--who have little regard for either the ethics of the advertising industry or its commitment to genuinely serving the public interest. Howard Luck Gossage, for example, argued:

I cannot recall the time when our industry has taken a public stand on anything that anybody gave two whoops in hell about. Oh, we come out foursquare for schools and against forest fires, but that's about as far as it goes. Do we ever do anything except mumble piously about the all too evident abuses within advertising--abuses inflicted on every man, woman, and child in this country? No, we content ourselves with such bold ventures as Advertising Recognition Week, as though anyone could help recognizing it.<sup>51</sup>

Surely, however, advertisers--and students in advertising sequences in our colleges and universities--can do better. In the landmark 1976 Supreme Court case *Virginia State Board of Pharmacy v. Virginia Citizens' Consumer Council, Inc.*<sup>52</sup>--which gave at least limited First Amendment protection to purely commercial advertising--Justice Harry Blackmun wrote that advertising can be "tasteless and excessive." Nevertheless, he stated, that "so long as we preserve a predominantly free enterprise economy, the allocation of our resources in large measure will be made through

numerous private economic decisions. It is a matter of public interest that those decisions in the aggregate be intelligent and well informed."

In short--and as noted earlier--advertising is part of "the system" and "if we are going to live in the kind of system we have created, then advertising plays an important and positive role. If we want to create and live in a different kind of system, then advertising may become unneeded, superfluous."<sup>53</sup> That does not mean, however, that if one accepts "the system," one need not be concerned that unethical advertising and unethical advertisers have too frequently played what amounts to a dysfunctional role in regards to informing the public. Baran and Sweezy see yet another problem:

The greatest damage done by advertising is precisely that it incessantly demonstrates the prostitution of men and women who lend their intellects, their voices, their artistic skills to purposes in which they themselves do not believe and that it teaches the essential meaninglessness of all creations of the mind: words, images and ideas. The real danger from advertising is that it helps to shatter and ultimately destroy our most precious non-material possessions: the confidence in the existence of meaningful purposes of human



activity and respect for the integrity of man.<sup>54</sup>

Those are harsh words--and words with which many in advertising will strongly disagree. That they are enunciated at all, however, stands as testimony to the need to raise the ethical consciousness of those active--and potentially active--in the field. As this paper argues, however, raising that ethical consciousness is not sufficient. In the end, advertising and advertising people will be judged on their conduct. Advertising will be looked at with suspicion by the general public so long as the pious rhetoric which Gossage spoke of is not translated into real world action. Certainly men and women active in advertising will not be "living a moral life...(if they form) convictions about what...(is) the right thing to do, and simply...(ignore) those convictions when it...(comes) to actual behavior."<sup>55</sup>

It must be understood, of course, that motivating the will to do that which is ethical when confronted with a difficult--and potentially costly--dilemma will never be an experience free of anxiety even for the advertiser fervently determined to do that which is right. One who is virtuous is not a robot or a superman. The virtuous person may be very anxious--even afraid--but, nevertheless, will behave well because he/she will not allow that fear to control his/her actions.

The difference between an ethical and unethical advertiser in many cases is not the presence or absence of anxiety or fear when it comes to doing that which is right in difficult situations.

Assuming there is a desire to do the ethical thing, the difference is one of will. An advertiser may want to be ethical, but if he/she is not willing to act on that desire, he/she must stand accused, in moral terms, as a coward. To paraphrase MacIntyre, one might state, "This is not to say that...(an advertiser) cannot genuinely care and also be a coward. It is in part to say that...(an advertiser) who genuinely cares and has not the capacity for risking harm or danger has to define himself, both to himself and to others, as a coward."<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps that is too uncharitable an indictment--and it is well to remember that in all discussions of ethics one should distinguish between the objective ideal which must not be compromised and the reality of fallible human nature. Nevertheless, one must caution that there is a very high price to pay--both for society and the individual--if the conscientious advertiser fails to act in accord with the dictates of his/her conscience.

## Endnotes

1. Thomas Lickona, "What Does Moral Psychology Have to Say to the Teacher of Ethics?" In Ethics Teaching in Higher Education edited by Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), p. 130.

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